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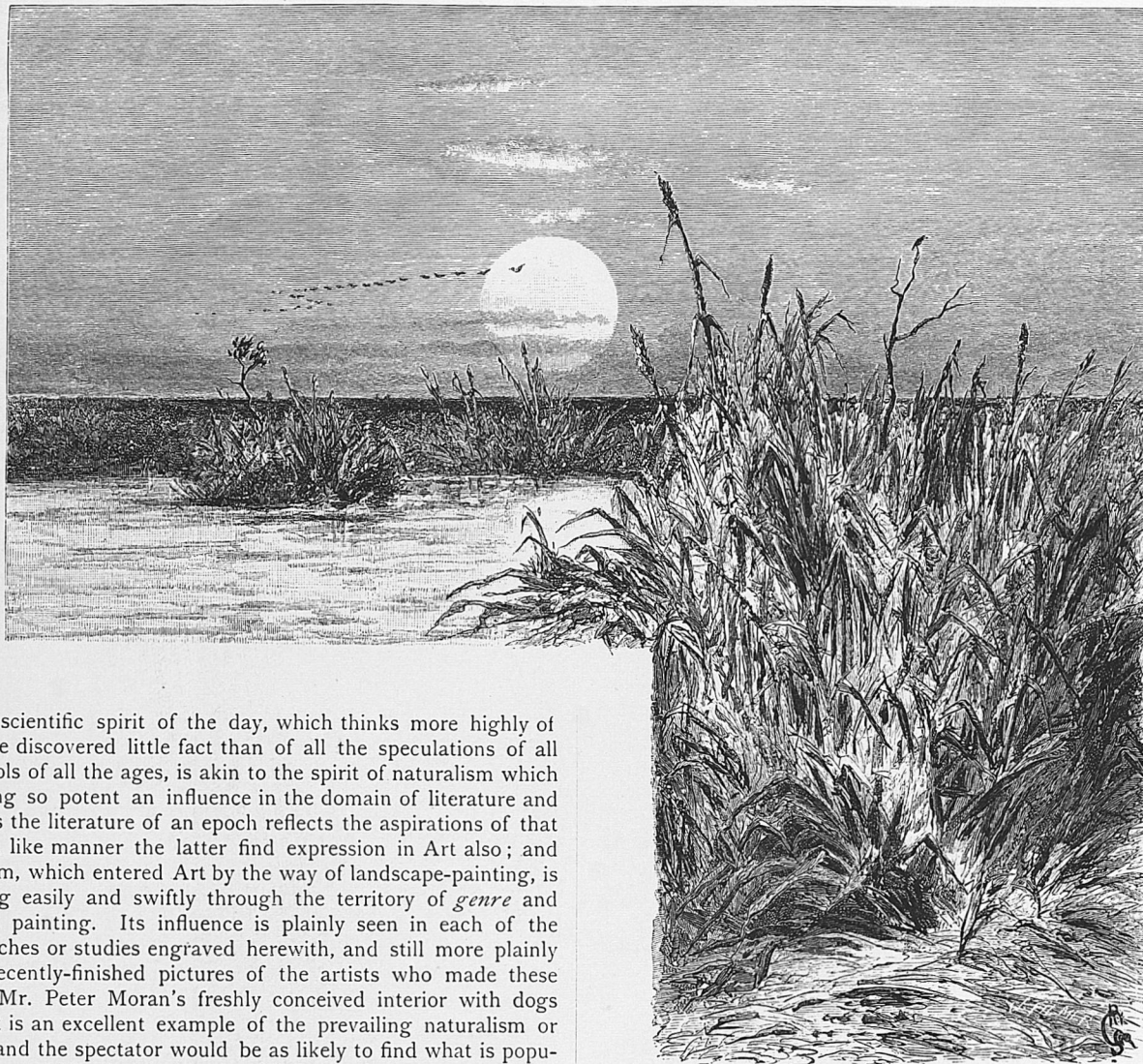
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SKETCHES AND STUDIES.

VI.

FROM THE PORTFOLIOS OF PETER MORAN, W. SARTAIN, J. W. CHAMPNEY, AND R. SWAIN GIFFORD.

*From a Sketch by R. Swain Gifford.*

THE scientific spirit of the day, which thinks more highly of one discovered little fact than of all the speculations of all the schools of all the ages, is akin to the spirit of naturalism which is exerting so potent an influence in the domain of literature and Art. As the literature of an epoch reflects the aspirations of that epoch, in like manner the latter find expression in Art also; and naturalism, which entered Art by the way of landscape-painting, is advancing easily and swiftly through the territory of *genre* and historical painting. Its influence is plainly seen in each of the four sketches or studies engraved herewith, and still more plainly in the recently-finished pictures of the artists who made these works. Mr. Peter Moran's freshly conceived interior with dogs and a cat is an excellent example of the prevailing naturalism or realism, and the spectator would be as likely to find what is popularly known as idealism in it as would the reader of novels to find idealism in the latest works of Zola. It has, indeed, been asserted that naturalism or realism—for the terms are interchangeable—as distinct from and opposed to idealism, has but a shadowy existence in the realm of Art; that the foundation of Art is Nature, and that the artist who supersedes Nature errs; that Art necessarily is naturalistic if it is reproductive at all, and that every sane idealist must be so too. The claim is advanced in some quarters that the so-called distinction between naturalism and idealism is a delusion and a snare—mere verbiage, signifying at bottom precisely nothing. The painter, it is urged, who reproduces masses is even more naturalistic than he who reproduces details, for natural beauty to the observant eye presents itself in masses rather than in details; and the painter who discards Nature as Blake did in so many of his designs, as Turner did in parts of 'The Slave-Ship,' as Elihu Vedder constantly does, is actually working outside the true sphere of Art, since Art first of all and fundamentally—whatever else it may be in addition—is nothing but Nature; Nature reproduced through the imagination, to be sure, but Nature nevertheless. No artist, it is asserted, reproduces Nature—in other words, paints or models naturalistically—by reproducing, simply and solely, the exact, distinct, minute facts of Nature; the impression which the great mother actually makes upon her children is lost in the con-

templation of an heterogeneous abundance of pre-Raphaelistic phenomena; tones and values and masses are the real lineaments of natural beauty, and the man who traffics in them is necessarily a naturalist. If he traffics in other commodities, it is asked, does that make him an idealist? In such reasoning there is undoubtedly some plausibility, but the science of nomenclature is not a piece of stupidity, and when careful writers or speakers discriminate between naturalism and idealism, and invent words to express the discrimination, the probability is, that the terms do not stand for the same notion. Nor do they.

Take Mr. Sartain's portrait of a young man, for instance. It is only a sketch or a study, if we please—for these terms, at least, are often convertible in the studios—but, if we contrast it with a sketch or study by the late Mr. George A. Baker or by Mr. Benjamin C. Porter, the essential difference between the two can scarcely fail to be obvious. In Mr. Sartain's work, which the engraver has most faithfully—that is to say, most realistically—reproduced, the effort clearly has been to paint Nature as the painter saw it, rather than as he felt it with his eyes shut. The latter

method is precisely that of the impressionists who are simply advanced idealists. Mr. Sartain himself, by-the-way, is often an impressionist, and a sagacious and successful one too; but in the present instance he has kept his eyes wide open, and has dealt in hard objective facts. The head of the young man in the engraving has not only the prime element of portraiture, vitality, but is really a likeness of a human being. It carries the evidence of being this on its surface. Without controversy, without the shadow of a doubt, it is a portrait of somebody, and not a mere studio reminiscence. Relief and solidity it has, clever environment of atmosphere, materiality and mobility, but beyond all these traits is its power to convince the spectator that it is the verisimilitude of a man who walks or has walked the earth. Now, how seldom in the case of Mr. Baker's or Mr. Porter's portraits do we encounter what the French mean when they speak of a picture's possess-

ing *le sens intime de la réalité*! The figures of these painters, admirable though they are in many respects—and the *Art Journal* has not failed to recognise their indisputable excellences—almost always impress one with a conviction that in the production of them the artists were, if it be not discourteous to use the expression, wool-gathering for the ideal. The so-called "agreeable," rather than the exactly true, seems to have been the object of their pursuit; and Frenchmen who call Gainsborough "*un peintre agréable*" would recognise in Mr. Porter's portraits much of the quality described by that phrase. They mean that Gainsborough was a painter of agreeable subjects, rather than that his painting itself is agreeable; and the inference is that, had his sitters been ugly, his work would have taken the ugliness out of them. Like Gainsborough, to be sure, Mr. Porter has been favoured with agreeable subjects; and it is within the truth to say that the spirit



From a Study by William Sartain.

which animates the portraiture of Mrs. Siddons in the London National Gallery is no stranger to the scheme of the large 'Portrait of a Lady' recently in the south room of the Academy in New York. Gainsborough's sympathy for feminine clothes in all the variety of their fashionable and frivolous convolutions is fully shared by Mr. Porter. It is difficult to conceive of the Boston artist's triumph with so clothesless a theme as 'Venus arising from the Foam,' for instance. The flesh in his latest Academy picture is too insipid to be real, and the face is strikingly destitute of vitality. But the clothes rival those of one of Madame Tussaud's celebrities. The least common excellence of a painted portrait is precisely the most indispensable, namely, the sense of life, as distinguished from the sense of wax; and in an "agreeable" painting it is often the most difficult to obtain. There are plenty of old painters who never got it at all—as any tourist of

the great European galleries may see for himself. Sometimes it is the drawing that is at fault; oftener it is the colour, and this is why many a portrait-painter appears in a revised and greatly improved edition in black-and-white reproductions of his works. A hundred times during the last few years, the wood-engraver has endowed with animation, with palpitation, the stillborn creations of the portrait-painter; a thousand times the slightest caricatures in *Punch* have rivalled in this supreme respect the solidest contributions to the Royal Academy. But the portrait-painter can paint only a single expression of countenance. The sculptor shows his model from many points of view, the painter from but one, and he must supply the necessary deficiency by producing an expression as complex as possible, so far, of course, as the essentials of character are concerned; for it is with the essentials only that his art can honourably deal—complex, yet single—that is, the

facial expression which, when true, does not tire, and which reveals the possibilities of the sitter. It is the old story of beauty being unity in variety, and it is in the effort to produce the requisite complexity that the painter's fidelity to Nature is tested and his infidelity exposed.

And what has been said of Mr. Sartain's portrait is equally true of Mr. Peter Moran's sketch. The Moran family is most creditably niched in the annals of American Art, and PETER MORAN has done his full share of labour in bringing to pass that consummation. He is the youngest of the three brothers (Edward, Thomas, and Peter), and he paints sheep, horses, hounds, and landscapes, and etches with unusual success. The sketch engraved for this number of the *Art Journal* represents him at his very best in the important matter of the reproduction of the features and deportment of animals, without exaggeration, without

humanisation, and without moralisation. The admirable beasts are introduced to the spectator with entire frankness and undisguised; they are allowed to stand on their own legs and behave themselves naturally—neither posed to astonish nor grimaced to amuse; they possess the prime requisite of portraiture—vitality, being neither wooden externally nor nerveless internally. It is as if Mr. Moran had said to himself: "Animal painting in this country has gone off towards extremes. On the one hand, the result has been dogs, monkeys, bears, and so on, in which human traits are exhibited, and to which humanised faces and forms are given—animals intended to embody the mental and moral characteristics of men and women, with little reference to the requirements or the possibilities of their own constitutions; animals who stand or fall by their fidelity not to themselves but to their betters, claiming the attention and respectful consideration of the public because



From a Sketch by Peter Moran.

they profess to show the public to itself as in a glass, darkly; animals whose structures and habits are described not in natural history but in society journals. On the other hand, the American studios have turned out representations of brutes who point morals to tales; mastiffs who sit as chief mourners at the head of coffins, and whine under the draped portraits of their masters that adorn the walls of hushed parlours; cats who snuggle close to a litter of kittens and look too benign even to snap or snarl at an unruly member of the batch, and accordingly drag you into reflecting upon the wonderful maternal instincts of the treacherous feline race; Newfoundland dogs who, by the expression of their faces, are never so happy as when holding upon their extended fore-paws little girls whom they have saved from drowning, thereby clamouring to teach you that, if you are but a little lower than the ministering angels, dogs are but little lower than

you. It is not enough to render the beast as he is, and in the ordinary avocations of his life; he must be shown in exceptional conditions, or else he must be idealised, must be 'freshened up,' must have his hair abnormally sleek or curly, his eyes abnormally expressive, and his general appearance as if just out of a lady's handbox." Avoiding these extremes, Mr. Peter Moran, as in the sketch before us, and in the charming pictures we published some months ago, has embraced a wholesome naturalism, and endeavoured to paint his animals just as their Creator made them; and the best result of all is that, having done so—having, in a word, started right—there gleams from his sketch, as from Mr. Sartain's, Mr. Gifford's, and Mr. Champney's, some bright feature, describe it as we may, define it we cannot, which puts it a thousand miles away from a merely photographic reproduction. The vital something which differentiates a work of Art alike from a

work of Nature and from a work of mechanism, makes its presence felt and radiates its mystic light.

When the Art-season ended last May, American artists undoubtedly were less despondent than on any similar occasion during the last ten years. The reply of the traditional watchman when asked, "What of the night?" was, "It looks like dawn." So long had the shades of night been falling, that many of the most capable painters in this country had begun to feel, or at least to fear, that it would never be morning again; one of these men remarked to the present writer that it really was getting to be im-

possible for an American artist to earn a living. In no land but theirs had it been the fate of their profession to be excluded persistently from the sunshine of appreciation and reward. "Things are getting to be so bad," they said one to another, "that by-and-by we shall starve. The sea which the Greeks hailed with acclamations of delight has been to us the easy highway of our rivals. Even now, on its billowy bosom, it is bearing onward for our extermination the hosts of European Art. What is the use of painting landscapes, when buyers patronise Corôt; or figure-pieces, when only Millet and Jules Breton are prized; or still-life, when Blaise



From a Sketch by J. Wells Champney.

Desgoffe is pulling at the purse-strings; or marines, when Clays and Ziem alone are thought capable of painting water; or portraits, when leading Americans go to France to have their likenesses taken; or *genres*, when Vibert and Zamacois have pocketed two republics?" The prospect was lugubrious, truly. But the Water-Colour Society opened its annual exhibition, and, before shutting it, sold almost every good member of the collection. Beyond all expectation or hope was the success of that affair. Bank-accounts were opened by artists who for years had never owned a check-book. The Society said, "Next year we will fill also the south gallery of the Academy with our wares." Already the

Artists' Fund Society had made unprecedented sales, Eastman Johnson's 'Glass with the Squire' (now in the Metropolitan Museum) fetching \$1,166.50, Guy's 'Favourite Pastime' \$918, and J. G. Brown's 'Three Scapegraces' \$821; and the total receipts being more than \$5,000 in excess of those of 1879, and about \$8,000 in excess of those of 1878, and the enthusiasm of rival bidders profuse. The "beastly" month of February closed by turning over to the exchequer of the Water-Colour Society about \$21,000 from the sales of pictures, against \$9,000 received in 1879, and \$6,000 received in 1878. It was an open-handed ending of an unusually open winter.

One month afterwards the loan exhibition of the Metropolitan Museum marked a distinct epoch in the history of American Art. For the first time, on such an occasion, the hanging-committee jumped into a national reputation, by giving American artists a fair chance in a competition with European artists. The material was abundant, the use of it was felicitous, the recognition of it by the public was immediate and hearty. The comparison between native and foreign Art was made under just and easy conditions, and the verdict was honourable to the former. Connoisseurs who for years had sneered at American pictures in the spirit of the *Saturday Review*, were led openly to confess that they had made a mistake, and that by the side of European paintings our home productions held their own with positive distinction. It seems, therefore, that American Art has entered upon a new and very hopeful epoch, and that the artists who are now filling their portfolios with fresh reminiscences and transcripts of American scenery never before had so many or valid reasons for encouragement. The demand for works of Art is to-day larger in every civilised country than at any previous period, and the supply is larger as well. At the latest Paris *Salon*, the latest London Royal Academy exhibition, and the latest New York Academy exhibition, more

pictures were refused admission, and more complaints were heard in consequence, than on any former similar occasion. In every metropolis that holds an annual display of native Art-works the cry is for increased accommodations for the display of the same; and in New York City, a few weeks ago, considerable interest was manifested in the proposal that the National Academicians should utilise the reservoir walls at Fifth Avenue and Forty-second Street, by making them the foundations of an immense and beautiful edifice, in which should be housed permanently a comprehensive and extended array of American pictures. Whether or not the scheme ever is successful is perhaps a matter less interesting than its significance as a sign of the times. That such a scheme should have been entertained, and by many intelligent persons deemed practicable and imperative, is a fact that will not soon be forgotten either by the artists or their friends. Art has not yet in this country become, as in France, a great popular concern, a condition of the national life, a prime cause of the national prosperity; but its possible function as such is to-day more widely and intelligently recognised than ever before, and there are not lacking sagacious citizens who give their material treasures to the cause of Art as a promoter of the commercial prosperity of their country.

ON THE LEGEND OF ST. MACARIUS.

OUR illustration is taken from a photograph of an illumination in an inedited Codex (11, 1, 122) of the Maghabechiana Library in Florence. The photograph has lately been published in the first number of Professor Bartoli's illustrated catalogue of Italian MSS. in Florence; but, as it will be described in the next number by Signor Alvisi, we profit by the notes kindly placed by him at our disposal. Palæographic experts assign the date of the Codex to the first half of the fourteenth century, so that this representation of the legend of St. Macarius is specially interesting, as being anterior to Orcagna's famous fresco in the Campo Santo at Pisa, in which that master has

represented the same subject, and in the treatment of which there are points of resemblance to that of the illumination. The allegory of "I tre morti ed i tre vivi" is widely diffused in Italian Art; but, strangely enough, there is no mention of its principal character, St. Macarius, in the best-known records of later date. But in those of very early date—as, for instance, in the Latin poem cited by Douce, and in many devotional books, as well as in the "Dance of Death" in the Cimetière des Innocents in Paris—he appears to have dropped out of the allegory as it gradually lost the monastic character which had originated it. Neither the recently discovered Latin poem from a Ferrarese



Codex in St. Vigo's monograph, "Le Danze Macabre in Italia" (Leghorn 1878), nor the Italian legend from a Vatican MS., quoted by Professor Monaci in No. 3 of the *Giornale di Filologia Romana* (Rome, 1878), contains any mention of St. Macarius. His figure is found in a fresco at the Benedictine monastery of Subiaco, but it represents a different development of the legend. The Codex from which our illustration is taken is a book of Lauds, which originally belonged to the Compagnia dello Spirito Santo, which formerly held its meetings in the church of the Augustins at Florence. There can be no question, it is to be presumed, of the date of the Codex, but it is evident that the architecture of the church in the back-

ground, and the mode of representing trees, are older than the date assigned to the MS. Illuminations frequently appear older than they are in reality, owing to the fact that conventual Art was sometimes more stationary in style than other Art. Considering its date, the action and expression of the figures are very striking, but are in harmony with the rapid progress made in Italian Art after the commencement of the great mediæval revival in the thirteenth century, a period of great vigour, during which the Italians shot ahead of all other nations. The false perspective of the coffins is curious, and, to the best of our recollection, is repeated in those in the Orcagna fresco.

LINDA VILLARI.